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BUYING INSECTICIDES

A Playlet in Three Scenes

By

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Characters

Robert Johnson Club president
Ruth Myers Club secretary
Herman Ford Druggist
Willie Durant Drug clerk
Mrs. Smith Mary's and John's mother
Mary Smith)
)
John Smith)
)
Dave Clark)
)
Sam Reed) Club members
)
Jane Jones)
)
Pete Miller)
)
Mabel Thompson)
Eight other club members
Fred Williams)
) Visiting club members
Ralph Hall)



Scene 1

Time: Spring, 19__

Place: Mary's and John's home

(Mary and John are seated at a table making plans for their community team in a garden contest. They were elected leaders of their team at a previous club meeting, when the contest was also arranged).

- MARY John, do you realize we haven't much time to complete our plans for the garden contest? Last night we didn't get a chance to decide on insecticides to kill the bugs that are almost sure to come. We've got to decide on that before we can pass the information along to the rest of the team.
- JOHN Have you that list of crops we plan to plant, and the number of rows in each crop?
- MARY Yes, they are still written on the blackboard - the one we used the other night when the club met here.
- JOHN I'll go get it. (Leaves the room).
- MARY (While John is out). I'll look over the bulletin to see what bugs we are likely to have.
- JOHN (Returns after a few minutes). Here it is, and the names of the vegetables are still there.^{1/}
- MARY According to this bulletin, there are lots of bugs that feed on vegetables.

1/ The following list showing kind of crops and number of rows to plant should be written legibly on the blackboard:

Crop	Number of rows	Crop	Number of rows
Potatoes	16	Onions	1
Corn	10	Lettuce	$\frac{1}{2}$
Collards.....	4	Spinach	$\frac{1}{2}$
Peas.....	4	Radishes.....	$\frac{1}{2}$
Cabbage.....	4	Carrots.....	1
Cauliflower.....	2	Melons.....	1
Tomatoes.....	1	Cucumbers.....	1
Beets.....	1	Squash.....	1
Turnips.....	1		

- JOHN Well, you remember the trouble Dad and Mother had with potato beetles and the little yellow striped beetles on melons and cucumbers.
- MARY That's right, and the little green worms just about ate all of Sallie Green's cabbage last year.
- JOHN You remember all the neighbors were talking about how bad the cutworms were early in the season.
- MARY And the little green plant lice were on almost everything. Let's check the names of the vegetables that are often damaged by the lice.
- JOHN (Goes to board and checks crops as he calls the names of those that are likely to have plant lice). We usually have lice on cabbage (pause), cauliflower (pause), turnips (pause), collards (pause), peas (pause), melons, and cucumbers.
- MARY What about the spinach?
- JOHN Ah! let the bugs have it. The more they eat, the less I will have to, and we will save that much insecticide.
- MARY I'll give the bugs credit for one thing - they know what's good for them.
- JOHN This bulletin says to control aphids - I guess aphids are plant lice - use malathion or nicotine and let's see how much we will need.
- MARY How large is our garden to be?
- JOHN As I remember, it will be about 50 by 125 feet, which is about one-seventh of an acre. We will run our rows the short way across the garden, which will make them about 50 feet long.
- MARY Well, how much insecticide will it take to protect our crops?
- JOHN (Picks up bulletin and quotes). It says here to use 1 to 1½ ounces of dust per 50 feet of row, or about 1 quart of spray per 50 feet of row.
- MARY How many times will we have to use it?
- JOHN We may get by with two, but I think we better count on applying it three times, because some crops may need several treatments. We probably won't have to treat all kinds of vegetables in the garden. We might figure on treating one-third of the garden. We'd better go in to town tomorrow to shop around for prices on other insecticides. We can figure the amount necessary later after we see what the other club members think of the idea.
- MARY I sure hope our team wins.

JOHN I do too. Well, if we can keep the bugs and diseases away, we ought to have a pretty good chance.

MOTHER (Rather loudly from outside the room). Mary! John! It's time to go to bed. You can finish that tomorrow.

MARY All right, Mother. Good night!

JOHN Good night, Mother!

Curtain

Scene 2

Time: One week later
Place? The corner drugstore

(To represent a drugstore, provide shelves and a counter on which can be placed a number of bottles and packages. Empty cartons may be used. They may be saved at home, or perhaps the drugstore can provide some).

DRUG CLERK (Young and quite sure of himself, and lets everyone know it. He is busy with some bottles as Mary and John enter). Hello, Mary! Hello, John! What will you have today?

JOHN Mary and I have entered a garden contest. We've formed a community team, and we've been elected the leaders. We've got to win against the team in the next town, so we've been shopping to get prices on insecticides to kill the bugs. If we can keep the bugs away, we can win.

DRUG CLERK (Speaks rather loudly and in a cocky manner). Oh! So you're going to be bugologists, are you? (Laughs).

MARY Call us bugologists if you like, but we know how much damage bugs can cause, and we want to be prepared.

DRUG CLERK (Still cocky, and speaking again rather loudly). What it takes to kill bugs, we've got plenty of! Just name your poison.

MARY (Takes out list). We will need about 4 ounces of nicotine.

DRUG CLERK (Pulls package off the shelf and shows it). Yep, we have
 . That's nicotine sulphate
(Get trade name from local dealer
containing 40 percent nicotine and done up in 1-ounce bottles. It
sells for 50 cents per bottle.

MARY There it is again! We'll need 4 ounces for our garden. That will amount to \$2, and for the 15 gardens it will cost \$30. That's for nicotine alone.

DRUG CLERK Well, that's what she sells for. (Places nicotine package on counter).

MARY What is the price of chlordane?

DRUG CLERK Oh! About 75 cents for a pound package of 5 percent dust, and we have plenty of it.

MARY The bulletin we had said to use one of the copper compounds for some diseases. How much does Bordeaux mixture cost?

DRUG CLERK Bordeaux! Where do you think you are, in France? (Looks around under the counter and on the shelves). Sure, we have it - 80 cents per pound. We also have other copper compounds which can be applied in a dust form as a wet spray.

MARY Which kind do you think is better, John?

JOHN Take the prices of all and we can figure out later which we want.
 (Mary gets prices from clerk and writes them down).

DRUG CLERK What else you got on your mind?

JOHN The bulletin said methoxychlor could be substituted for control of some bugs. What is it worth?

DRUG CLERK Methoxychlor? (Looks blank and stammers). Wa-wa-wa-well, methoxychlor. You mean methoxychlor. (Goes to shelves again and looks around).

JOHN (Allows clerk to hunt a while, then nudges Mary and smiles). Apparently you don't have methoxychlor, or don't even know what it is, so just forget it.

DRUG CLERK Oh! What do you want to fool around with so many poisons for? (Reaches to shelf and pulls down a container). Now, here is a cure-all which the salesman said would kill any bug that crawls. It may be a little more expensive, but if it kills all bugs, it's worth the difference.

MARY My mother always said that a medicine that was good for everything wasn't good for anything, and I am afraid the same would be true of insecticides.

DRUG CLERK (Puts that package back and gets out another). Well, now, here is another one. You can read right here on the label that it's good for cabbageworms, bean beetles, cucumber beetles, potato bugs. (Any number of bugs common to a given locality can be substituted).

JOHN (Interrupts). I am afraid that's the trouble, it's too good for the bugs. What we want is something bad for the bugs. Mary is right. We will stick to the recommendations in our bulletin. What else do you have listed, Mary?

MARY How about the insecticide--rotenone?

DRUG CLERK Now, what are you doing, trying to kid me?

MARY No. (Shows the clerk her list). Here is the name just as I copied it from the bulletin.

DRUG CLERK You must have copied it wrong.

JOHN No, she didn't, because we talked about it at home.

DRUG CLERK Well, then, it must be a misprint.

DRUGGIST (Enters while clerk is still talking, and just as clerk stops talking druggist remarks rather jokingly). What's all the commotion?

DRUG CLERK John and Mary are trying to find out what I knew about bug control, and I don't know whether or not they are trying to kid me.

DRUGGIST What seems to be the difficulty?

JOHN Well, we just asked about rotenone.

DRUGGIST Oh yes! Rotenone--that's a product that comes from both the derris and cube plants, and there are several products manufactured under different trade names. They sell for different prices, depending on the amount of rotenone they contain. The trade names of some of these are: Cuber, Derridust, Derrispray, Derox, Dustall, Kubatox, Rotofume, and I don't know how many others.

MARY Why do they recommend rotenone?

DRUGGIST Because it can be used nearer harvest, even between picking of snap beans. On the other hand, DDT must not be applied to snap beans after the pods begin to form.

JOHN Does the same thing apply to any other insecticide?

- DRUGGIST Yes, in fact most of them. This emphasizes the need for reading the labels before handling or applying any insecticide.
- MARY What do you mean by handling them?
- DRUGGIST Many of the insecticides in use today can be absorbed through the skin, - so to be safe, it is well to wash thoroughly with soap and water after working with any insecticide.
- MARY You have about scared us out. When we consider the cost and the many precautions to follow, it seems as though we may as well take a chance with the bugs.
- DRUGGIST Oh, I don't think so. I believe we can figure some way out. Why are you interested in insect control at this time of the year?
- MARY You see, the members in our club are planning gardens for a contest this summer, and John and I are making plans early and are getting prices on insecticides.
- DRUGGIST Oh, I see. Well, you know the smaller the package, the more expensive the product, because it costs about as much to pack an ounce as it does to pack a pound, or even 5 pounds.
- JOHN (Rather surprised). Say, I have an idea. Why can't all we club members pool our orders and buy larger amounts, then divide the material according to our needs.
- MARY If we do that, we will need to label properly each package, so that we will know which insecticide we are using.
- JOHN More important than that is to make sure you don't mistake some of these poisons for vanilla or flour and accidentally give me a dose in some cookies.
- MARY Pooling the orders is a good idea. Let's bring it up at the next club meeting.
- DRUGGIST (As Mary and John start for the door). All right, when you find out how much you need, I shall be glad to have your business, and if I don't have in stock the materials you need, I'll be glad to get just what you want and give you a special price.
- MARY AND JOHN (As they leave). Thank you, and we shall see you again.

Curtain

At the next meeting, the club members favor the idea of pooling their orders. The insecticides are purchased, and the members of the community team proceed with the planting and care of their gardens. John's and Mary's team wins the contest.

Scene 3

Time: Fall, 19__
Place: 4-H Clubhouse

(The club officers and a few members are in the room when the curtain rises. Other members continue to enter and all exchange greetings).

CLUB PRESIDENT (Looks at his watch). It is 8 o'clock and time to start our meeting. All members be seated. (He rises to start the meeting, when an awful commotion takes place outside and Pete comes rushing in). What's the matter, Pete? Did you have a flat tire, run out of gas, or couldn't you give your baby brother the slip?

PETE Oh! I thought I was ready to come, but Mom made me wash up better and change clothes. I guess next time I'd better do it without being told.

(President calls meeting to order. Leads members in repeating national 4-H Club pledge. Roll call, reading of minutes, unfinished business, all conducted in the usual manner).

PRESIDENT While in town the other evening, I met two members from the Thrifty Club at Oak Hill. They were anxious to know how we won the garden contest. I invited them to our meeting tonight, since we were going to discuss this matter anyway. (Pause). Members of the Vitamin Garden Club, this is Fred Williams (Fred stands, club gives him a good hand) and Ralph Hall (Ralph stands and club again cheers).

MR. WILLIAMS (Rises). As Mr. President just stated, I am from the Thrifty 4-H Club at Oak Hill, and also my friend Ralph Hall. (Mr. Hall rises). We came from one of the clubs defeated in the garden contest.

PRESIDENT We feel honored to have visitors from a rival club. Let us give them a hearty welcome. (All rise and sing a welcoming song).

MR. WILLIAMS (After all are seated and things have quieted down, rises). Mr. President.

PRESIDENT Mr. Williams.

MR. WILLIAMS We were asked by our club to scout around to try to find out how your club members handled their gardens to win the contest by so many points.

PRESIDENT At the meeting tonight we planned to review the work of this year and make preliminary plans for next year. (Pause)

In order that we may have a "little" competition next year, we will tell you our secret. Since Mary and John Smith originated the idea, I will ask one of them to tell what made them think of the plan.

MARY (Punches John. John urges Mary to go. Finally, Mary goes to a place by the table and relates the story). Mr. President.

PRESIDENT Miss Smith.

MARY Last spring John and I were making plans for our garden, and after we decided on the crops we wanted to plant, we got to thinking of how bad the bugs were on the gardens summer before last, so we began figuring on poisons to kill them. After we decided how much it would take, we went to town and shopped around for prices. We found that to buy the small quantities we would need, the sprays would be too expensive. The druggist told us it would be much cheaper to buy in larger quantities. We just wondered how many of the club members would be interested in pooling their orders with ours, so we took the matter up at the next club meeting.

RALPH HALL Mr. President.

MR. PRESIDENT Mr. Hall.

MR. HALL Oh! So that's how you managed such thorough bug control and won the contest.

MARY It wasn't entirely the pooling that did it, although by estimating our needs we bought enough material for more than one spraying. The main reasons were, we got the right kind of insecticides, and by checking on each other we did a more thorough job of spraying.

MR. HALL How did you raise the money to buy the poisons?

MARY We put on a play and borrowed some money on the strength of income we expect from sale of our vegetables.

MR. WILLIAMS Well, that's what we wanted to know. With this thought in mind, we'll give you plenty of competition next year.

PRESIDENT It seems that our club has done some very good missionary work tonight, so let's adjourn the meeting and entertain our guests with refreshments and games. (The meeting is adjourned).

Final curtain

